RESEARCH PROPOSAL OF THE THESIS TITLED

THE STUDY OF THE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT FMCG UNDER THE FMCG SECTOR WHICH SPECIFICALLY REFERS TO DISTRIBUTORS AND THEIR OPERATIONS AND CHALLENGES

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations	Full Form
FMCG	Fast-Moving Consumer Goods
SCM	Supply Chain Management
SCOR	Supply Chain Operations Reference
TOC	Theory of Constraints
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning

1. Introduction

The consumer goods fast-moving (FMCG) industry is crucial to economic growth since it supplies individuals with food, beverages, personal care products, and household items they need daily. The industry is fundamentally founded on speed and time efficiency, with great dependence on good supply chain management to provide products from manufacturers to end-users (Lysa, Galkin & Yemchenko, 2022). Distributors have the significant function in between supply chain linking manufacturer and retailers regarding supplying the product with all the components like inventory, logistic, and customers. They have a significant function especially in densely populated areas, a primary source of business activity around Mumbai, India, with excellent variety among customers and increasing numbers of stores. Assessment of the behavior of supplies chain management in such an area provides a window into the operation of this industry.

The distributers face a lot of problems that impact the performance of the supply chain. These factors include transport obstacles found in poor infrastructure and inadequate storage places, stock-flow problems, limited technological support, and demand volatility (Nozari, Szmelter-Jarosz & Ghahremani-Nahr, 2022). Also, dealers experience growing operational expenses, delay in payment, and employee productivity issues. Both the supply chain and customers are inconvenienced as a consequence of these obstacles, which limit their operational performance and directly impact the efficiency of the FMCG supply chain in the area.

Therefore, the following research objectives have been developed: The objective of this present study is to investigate the various supply chain management practices of the FMCG distributors with reference to their operations and difficulties faced by them (Hossain et al., 2020). To make the relevant suggestions this work contributes to defining the major

challenges and considering their influence on distributor performance for improving the efficiency of operations and boosting the long-term development in the FMCG supply chain of the region.

2. Review of Literature

The basics of supply chain management can be explained using several theories and frameworks out there that offer some understanding of supply chain integrating flow of goods, services and information (Ngomane, 2023). Of these, Supply Chain Operations Reference (SCOR) model is most useful in analyzing the performance of FMCG distributors (Putra, Tarigan & Siagian, 2020). This model defines key supply chain processes like- planning, sourcing, production, delivery, and returned goods so that the stakeholders may analyse and optimize the supply chain performance (Nozari et al., 2022).

The TOC focuses on increasing the stocks of goods that have a high criticality and pace of consumption or has a flow issue in the supply chain, which is valuable for FMCG distributors struggling with inventory or logistic issues (Jepherson, Ngugi & Moronge, 2021). Additional parts of lean supply chain management also play their roles in eradicating or reducing wastes while creating values that also assist in solving the various operations' issues that distributors encounter. Together these frameworks compose the theoretical foundation within which the position of distributors in the FMCG segment will be discussed (Tarigan, Jiputra & Siagian, 2021).

Several prior works focus on critical areas in distributor operation and performances as well as the issues surrounding the supply chain process (Muhalia, Ngugi and Moronge, 2021). Consequently, research points to the significant role played by distributors in the FMCG sector by providing shelf presence and restocking of products and distribution working (Jackson et al., 2023). Some of the common issues are poor infrastructure, last leg

delivery difficulty, and non-auto vending (Olutimehin et al., 2024). For instance, through real-time information sharing of stock, distributors struggle with issues such as stock cover and stock shortage (Adekuajo et al., 2023). In addition, difficulties such as high transportation costs and long transits arising from poor road structure have also been noted as major operational challenges (Hossain et al., 2020).

To overcome such problems some of the solutions like the use of technology like ERP system and computerized and automated inventory system has been recommended (Madhusoodana & Parvathy, 2023). Other past works also highlight the aspect of supply chain integration as a critical success factor in supply chain performance (Neboh & Mbhele, 2020). But the extent of the success of these solutions can be moderate by the regional specific market and infrastructural conditions (Tanudiharjo et al., 2021). However, to the knowledge despite the proliferation of literature on the concept of supply chain management and the distributor operations (Pellegrino, Costantino & Tauro, 2021). There are few or almost no comparative empirical studies conducted with regards to identifying the issues specific to the distributors functioning in a particular geographic area say for instance (Barcellos de Paula, Gil-Lafuente & Rezende, 2021).

Although global solutions could be suggested, there is dearth of the evidence of the local drivers affecting distributors' performance, namely, population density, customer behavior and infrastructure limitations in the region (Juma & Kilani, 2022). Moreover, several prior investigations pay little attention to the distributor's attitudes because they investigate either the manufacturer or retailer attitudes about the matter (Asgharizadeh et al., 2023). It also results in the inability to recognize regional on-operation problems in the context of distributors and realistic solutions for them (Anaja & Bagobiri, 2022). Filling this gap is important for designing measures that will improve the supply chain in the best way, taking

into consideration local conditions (Xu & Zhao, 2022). To fill in the gaps in previous research and build on the established theoretical frameworks, we are expanding this study to learn more about distributor operations and FMCG supply chain concerns.

3. Research Gap and Statement of the Problem

The issue with the FMCG distributors is that they have a variety of operational problems that impact their efficiency. Some of these issues are:

Transport Problems: Firstly, the lack of an effective transport framework, secondly, the widespread issue of traffic congestion, and thirdly, delivery disruptions are the major hindrances that prevent proper FMCG product delivery to retailers (Madhusoodana & Parvathy, 2023).

Inventory Management Issues: Then, the distributors are faced with issues of how to inventory the stock properly; one can lead to carrying too much inventory, which has a high cost of holding, while the other can result in stockouts and the resultant customer loss.

Low Technology Adoption: In general, there exists a shortfall in the application of advanced technology for real-time stock monitoring, automated inventory control, and information-based decision making (Neboh & Mbhele, 2020). This lack of technological integration hinders operational efficiency and flexibility.

Skills and Workforce Challenges: Distributors also struggle with a lack of skilled personnel to handle the complex logistics and supply chain management tasks effectively. This contributes to inefficiencies and mistakes in day-to-day operations.

3.1. Research Gap

There has been a paucity of focused research on distributors, their operational characteristics,

and the challenges they confront, in contrast to the mountain of literature on FMCG supply chain management. The exact relationship between distributor performance and current theoretical frameworks like SCOR, TOC, and lean supply chain management remains unknown, but they do provide substantial insights. There is also very little known about distributor efficiency and its effect on the overall supply chain performance in terms of inventory, supply disruption, and inefficiencies in the logistics. Most processes of the supply chain have been significantly affected by digitalization and automation; nevertheless, how they directly affect the operational efficacy of the FMCG distributors is not yet researched. The other element that is absent and overlooked is what the distributor management can also do to ensure customer satisfaction and retention. Moreover, the impact of such disturbances as changing demand and transit limitations on the distributor profitability is barely researched. These gaps are important to be addressed in order to enhance the distributor effectiveness and supply chain resiliency.

3.2. Research Questions of the Study

Q1. What is the impact of distributor efficiency to the overall performance of the FMCG supply chain?

Q2. What is the contribution of digitization and automation to the improvement of the operating efficiency of the FMCG distributors?

Q3. Which are the primary operational challenges that the FMCG distributors face, including logistical inefficiencies and supply chain discontinuation?

Q4. What are the effects of inventory management practices on the operational cost and profitability of FMCG distributors?

Q5. How is there any relationship in FMCG supply chain between customer retention, customer satisfaction and effective management of distributors?

Q6. What is the impact of supply chain disruptions e.g. demand variability and transportation issues on distributor operations and profitability?

4. Rationale of the Study

4.1. Need of the Study

Transportation structure, inventory control, and the absence of technology application that impedes the efficiency of distributors are the current major problems in the FMCG sector (Tanudiharjo et al., 2021). It is essential to solve these issues in order to improve the supply chain management, reduce the effect of the disruptions in the operations, and meet the demands of the ever-growing business hub. This work paper will target to find some of the biggest operation problems and propose remedies.

4.2. Significance of the Study

General and niche challenges have already been demonstrated by the operational IMFOC to the FMCG distributors, and this research contributes to illuminating these issues. Therefore, it removes the gap between theory and scripts in the real world as it is concerned with the local issues such as transport, stock, and the productivity of people (Xu and Zhao, 2022). The findings of the study can guide policymakers and business organizations to make specific recommendations on how to enhance efficiency in the supply chain, which subsequently are expected to lead to an increase in consumer happiness and improvement of the economic development in the region.

5. Objectives of the Study

1) To explore the relationship between distributor effectiveness and the general

performance of the supply chain in the FMCG industry.

2) To test how automation and digitization affect the efficiency of the activities of FMCG distributors.

3) To identify key areas of operation concern, including logistics inefficiencies and supply chains disturbances, which affect distributor performance.

4) To understand the effect of the inventory management practices of the FMCG distributors on their cost of operation and profitability.

5) To determine how effective distributor management impacts on customer satisfaction and retention within the FMCG supply chain.

6) To test how distributor activities and profitability are affected by supply chain shocks such as demand uncertainty and transportation shocks.

6. Hypothesis of the Study

H1: There is a strong relationship between the distributor efficiency and the overall performance of the supply chain in the FMCG sector.

H2: Digitalization and automation play an important role in determining the efficiency of operations of FMCG distributors.

H3: The distributor performance is negatively influenced by operational problems, such as the inefficiencies in logistics and the disruption of the supply chain.

H4: Ineffective inventory management practices are the causes of high operating costs and reduced profitability of FMCG distributors.

H5: Customer satisfaction and retention in FMCG industry are directly influenced by proper management of distributors.

H6: Demand shocks and transport challenges are the issues of supplying chain that can influence distributor operations and profitability significantly.

7. Research Methodology

This theory based study will assume a systematic and organized approach to answer the research objectives and test the formulated hypotheses. The analysis will use effective research methods that will enable gathering of sound, thorough, and quantitative data to facilitate the inquiry.

7.1. Research Design

The research design will be based on the exploratory approach to determine the root causes of operational issues in the distribution of FMCGs. The approach will determine significant problems, unveil patterns and create improvement strategies (Reza, 2020).

An exploratory research plan shall be done to determine the relationship between the cause and the effect of the implied variables. As an example, the research will explore the effects of such variables as:

Logistics issue on ordering, receipt, storage or shipping of goods How the monitoring of inventory affects the efficiency of distributors Advances in technology, and their efficiency.

7.2. Primary Data Sources

Primary data will be collected using Google Surveys since it is not very expensive in reaching distributors of FMCG (Shakur et al., 2024). The survey will be in the form of a questionnaire that upon the completion of its administration shall aim at exposing all facets of the real-world problems the distributors are facing at the moment as well as population

statistics. To facilitate high-dependence of the results, 101 respondents will be used in the poll.

7.3. Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data sources for FMCG distribution include public records, Trade Journals, market surveys, logistics data, retailer sales accounting, and Fianncial brief (Ebrahim, Niemann & Kotzé, 2022). Data from these origin could give light on things like customer habits, logistical optimization in addition with market tendencies.

7.4. Survey Design

The survey instrument is going to be in the form of a structured questionnaire that will aid in collecting both operational and other demographic data of the FMCG distributors It will be a ten-question short survey, out of which seven questions will address seven key operational issues that affect distributors (Edunjobi, 2024). These will be topic-based questions including those related to inventory, logistic problems, and use of technology that will focus on finding out the most challenging problems affecting efficiency of distributors. Between the three demographic questions to be included, we shall have core basics as shown below, these questions will aid in placing the findings into the right perspective depending on the distributor's characteristics to establish any trends.

7.5. Data Preparation and Cleaning

Data planning and cleaning entail designing and preparing the collected statistical for interpretation.Operationalization of the metrics, removing inaccuracies, handling data imputation and wrangling consistency to improve the performance and consistency of the research outcomes (Shakur et al., 2024). In a pre-analysis, the data collected will undergo techniques of processing and scrubbing to improve the accuracy of the data. There will also

be a selection of non-response procedure or inconsistent data, elimination of outliers and standardizing the data set.

7.6. Data Analysis

Data analysis will be carried out using Microsoft Excel, supplemented with tools for descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. The first data analysis that will be conducted in this research will be descriptive statistics whereby the raw data of the given set will be summarized to identify underlying structures within a given data set. Descriptive analysis resolve the unevil degree of relation between variables including the relationship amidst the technical implementation or automation and the efficiency of the distributors (Reza, 2020). Hypothesis coupled with appropriate subset hypotheses about the influence of some given independent variables on an independent factors, for instance, distributor performance will be evaluated by coreleation.

8. Implications of the Study

The study's findings will be very useful in identifying the primary operational difficulties facing FMCG distributors based on survey results. It will identify some of the new issues that organisations experience, such as unsystematic stock control, transport issues, and sluggish adoption of technology. These issues will then be correlated with distributor performance to examine the repercussion of capacity utilization, effective function, inventory and delivery of services (Apolonio & Norona, 2021). In addition, because of the quantitative data collection approach, the study will make use of biverate research in to ascertain the correlation across the preceding hurdles and distributor performance.

The research will provide directions and proposals that will be relevant to the local realities (Guerrero et al. 2021). These approaches might incorporate proposed solutions

regarding infrastructure for the supplies chain logistics, resources allocation technologies, and enhanced relations between various chains of the supply chain.

9. Tentative Chapter Plan

Chapter No.	Titles of Chapters
1	**Introduction**
1.1	History and Development of FMCG Supply Chain Management
1.2	Distribution Networks and their role in FMCG
1.3	Challenges in Distribution Operations
1.4	Justification and the Need for the Study
2	**Review of Literature**
3	**Approach & Methodology**
3.1	Research Objectives
3.2	Methodology: Google Surveys for Primary Data Collection
3.3	Description of Study Instruments
3.4	Sampling Methods: 101 Respondents
3.5	Secondary Data Sources: Reports, Publications, and Sales Data
3.6	The Study's Limitations
4	**Data Analysis**
4.1	Sample Details and Characteristics
4.2	Operational Challenges faced by Distributors
4.3	Insights from Secondary Data Sources
5	**Conclusion and Suggestions**
5.1	Implications for Research
5.2	Managerial implications
5.3	Further Research Areas

6	References

10. Scope and Limitations of the Study

10.1. Scope

This concern broadens the scope of the study and directs it towards identifying the various operation-based problems faced by the distributors in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods location. Some of the important areas of focus of this research will include inventory control, distribution, technology integration, and overall distributor performance in this specific area (Magagula, Meyer & Niemann, 2020). The data collected in this research shall therefore be primary and obtained from surveys administered among the FMCG distributors to enhance relevance of the findings in the current circumstances of the supply chain operations in the area (Eltawy & Gallear, 2021). The data to be collected will be quantitative, in terms of survey, and Microsoft Excel statistical tool shall be used to analyse the data with support from descriptive statistics, correlation and regression techniques. In this research, the analysis of the results will give the extended description of the difficulties that affect the distributors which may help to develop solutions for increasing the appropriate efficiency and boosting the Supply Chain in the region.

10.2. Limitations

This study has certain limitations that must be acknowledged. First, there is a regional bias in the research, as it focuses on a specific area. This limits the generalizability of the findings, since the demand and supply chain dynamics in one region may differ significantly from those in other urban or rural regions. Therefore, the conclusions regarding operational constraints and distribution performance may not be applicable to distributors in other locations. Second, the method of gathering data relied only on surveys from respondents, without triangulation

using other sources of data. This usage can have biases (Ogbeyemi, Ogbeyemi & Zhang, 2024). For example, self-reporting can result in social desirability bias where respondents will cast themselves in a more positive light. Moreover, their perceptions would be overestimated or understated, and this can impact the reliability of the findings. While a sample size of 101 respondents is statistically valid, it might not allow detailed information regarding the characteristics of distributors, restricting data richness. Further, the study mostly used quantitative methods that restricted a more in-depth examination of the complex problems of distributors. Finally, the utilization of a cross-sectional survey design restricts the observation of change over time. Consequently, the research cannot embrace dynamic changes in distribution performance and functional limits. Regardless of these constraints, the findings are useful and can help to improve supply chain management in similar areas to the one investigated.

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